



# LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

March 2009

## Update: Who/What's New, in the State Legislature?

### **Senate:**

Majority Leader:  
Malcolm Smith



Minority Leader:  
Dean Skelos



Education Chair:  
Suzi Oppenheimer



### **Assembly:**

Speaker:  
Sheldon Silver



Majority Leader:  
Ron Canestrari



Minority Leader:  
James Tedisco



Education Chair:  
Catherine Nolan



Following a contentious battle for leadership, Malcolm A. Smith emerged victorious as NYS Senate Majority Leader, securing a Democratic majority in the Senate for the first time in 43 years. Senator Smith pledged that reforms will be made to the legislative process and that he would work with Governor David A. Paterson and fellow legislators to revive NY's economy and job opportunities.

While Senator Dean Skelos remains the leading Senate Republican, many committee chairmanships have turned over. Most critical to PTA Members is the appointment of Suzi Oppenheimer as the new Senate Chair for Education. NYS PTA thanks Senator Steve Saland, a key supporter of public education, for his past leadership and we look ahead to working with Senator Oppenheimer. Senator Oppenheimer is a past PTA president of the Central School Mamaroneck and has been "an energetic and vocal advocate for education, environmental protection, child care, health care, fiscal reform and the arts.

While there have been changes in some Assembly Committees, the Leadership continues as above. For more information...

<http://www.senate.state.ny.us/sws/sd14/msmithremarks.pdf>

<http://www.nysenate37.com/37/Biography.aspx>

[http://www.nyspta.org/pdfs/advocacy/Legislative\\_Directory\\_2009\\_2-02-09.pdf](http://www.nyspta.org/pdfs/advocacy/Legislative_Directory_2009_2-02-09.pdf)

## **Around the State:**

### **Major Statewide Legislation To Protect Children from Sex Offenders Introduced**

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, with the support of Senate Majority Leader Malcolm A. Smith, Senator Craig Johnson introduced senate bill S.1300 to protect children from sexual predators. This is a direct response to a recent Supreme Court decision that invalidated Rockland County's sex offender residency law. The decision nullifies 80 "local safety zone" laws across the state based on the determination that only local

probation officers have the authority to determine residency for sex offenders. The legislation is currently in the Senate Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Corrections and discussions are underway seeking Assembly co-sponsorship. For information...

[http://www.senate.state.ny.us/pressreleases.nsf/\(\\$all\)/3F0DD67D051C6F478525754E006FF4E3/\\$file/johnson%20sex%20offender%20final.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.senate.state.ny.us/pressreleases.nsf/($all)/3F0DD67D051C6F478525754E006FF4E3/$file/johnson%20sex%20offender%20final.pdf?OpenElement)

<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menugetf.cgi>

### **State Comptroller's Right to Audit Charter School Upheld by Appeals Court**

A NYS Appeals court has upheld the constitutionality of a 2005 state law requiring the state comptroller to audit New York's charter schools. The 4 -1 ruling by the Appellate Division of state Supreme Court overturned an April 2008 decision by state Supreme Court that had blocked the charter school audits. The issue revolves around the 2005 law enacted that, in addition to other provisions, required the state comptroller to audit all public school districts. There are 115 charter schools operating on public funds from public school districts around the state. New York State PTA resolution "Funding for Charter Schools" was updated by delegates of the 2008 state convention and seeks to hold charter schools to the same financial accountability as all public schools. For information...

[http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on\\_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20February%202%202009&refno=675](http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20February%202%202009&refno=675)

<http://www.nyspta.org/pdfs/advocacy/WHEREWESTAND200809post-convention.pdf>

### **Budget Documents: Law Changes for Transparency**

There are new statutory requirements for school budget public visibility that will go into effect for 2009. Aside from being required to have copies of proposed budgets and attachments at district offices, budget must also be available at the public library(ies) within the district and posted on district web sites (if one exists); the administrative component of the budget must include "all compensation, salaries and benefits for all administrators and supervisors; and, school districts must provide a tax exemption impact report to be included in any notice of the preparation of the budget. For information...

[http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on\\_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20February%202%202009&refno=693](http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20February%202%202009&refno=693)

### ***Around the Capitol:***

#### **President Obama Signs Expansion of SCHIP**

President Obama signed into law a major expansion of children's health insurance, reversing limitations on states enrolling kids from higher-income families. In a Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> memo, Obama directed the Department of Health and Human Services to withdraw controversial Bush administration orders intended to restrict states from expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). For information...

<http://thehill.com/leading-the-news/obama-rescinds-bush-schip-restrictions-2009-02-05.html>

#### **Economic Stimulus: For Education, a Matter of Scale**

Schools stand to benefit from the federal economic-stimulus package being debated in Congress. While scale is a matter of debate, will this lead to an expanded federal role in education decisions? For information...

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/02/11/21stimsenate.h28.html?tmp=1554365269>